



# BACKPACK

*We're ready! Are you?*

*Volume 3*

## Working with Students

Students have proven to be a huge asset to some CERT programs. Students have used local CERT programs to fulfill local community service requirements. In other areas, student CERT members have gone on for training as volunteer firefighters and EMTs. But working with students raises some issues that you will need to address before including them in your program.

### Developing a Strategy

Before deciding whether to allow students to participate in your CERT program, you should develop a strategy for who can participate and how.

Topic	Points to Consider
Who Can Participate	Students as young as 14 have participated in some CERT programs with parental permission. Other programs allow student participation only if a parent also participates. Consider the needs in your community to determine what age or other restrictions to place on student participation.
How Students Participate	Students who lack maturity may take unnecessary risks during classroom activities, exercises, and activation. State laws may prohibit students under a specified age from participating in some types of tasks or from participating during specified hours (e.g., after 10 p.m.).

## Recruiting Students

Recruiting students can be easy, especially if you have the cooperation of the local school district. Some suggestions for recruiting students include the following:

- If the school district requires community service, work with the district to ensure that students who volunteer for CERTs receive community service credit for their time.
- Develop targeted brochures and flyers. Include your name and phone number or email address on all recruiting materials. Coordinate with the local high school to ensure that the brochures and flyers are placed where they will draw the students' attention.
- Schedule an introductory session for potential student volunteers and their parents. Require parents to accompany their students to this session. This session will allow parents and students to ask questions about the program and allow you to establish ground rules and expectations for participation.
- If possible, allow students and their parents to observe a classroom session or, better yet, an exercise. Observing CERT activities will provide a true "flavor" of what CERTs do and how.

## Training Students

Students do not require changes in or accommodations to the training to be successful, but may require additional safeguards to ensure their safety. When training student volunteers:

- Establish a climate for safety early in the class. Emphasize the importance of what CERTs do by pointing out that CERTs can make the difference between life and death-but only if CERT members operate safely.
- State the classroom and activity rules clearly and early in the training. Repeat them as necessary, and do not allow deviation from the established safety standard.
- Observe student volunteers closely, especially during the early activities. Make corrections to technique and safety requirements, but do not single students out unless it is absolutely necessary to avoid injury.
- Counsel students who ignore safety rules privately, if possible. Tell them that continued violation of safety rules will cause them to be excluded from the program. Follow through and send students home if they continue to ignore the rules.

**For additional information on Michigan Citizen Corps and the CERT program contact Michigan Citizen Corps Program Director Gary Zulinski at (517) 241-3867 or [zulinskig@michigan.gov](mailto:zulinskig@michigan.gov)**